CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

23 July 1981

Colonel James W. Dunn
Chief, Histories Division
Department of the Army
The Center of Military History (~~Pentagon~~)
Washington, DC 20314

Dear Colonel Dunn:

We have reviewed the two portions of your draft manuscript, Army Communications in Southeast Asia. A list of deletions for "A Flawed Legacy 1945-1960" (Portion) which must be made prior to release as an unclassified history is attached. Pages of the manuscript where deletions must be made have been paper clipped and the deletions have been highlighted with yellow marker. We have also included a list of suggested deletions in "North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Communications" (Portion). These are CIA report subjects and NIS titles and descriptions which do not contain classified information in themselves but give a reader of the unclassified history possible access to documents that are still classified at the Secret Level. We would prefer that these be deleted if you can do so without weakening the authority of your manuscript.

Sincerely,

[redacted] 25X1A

Chief, Classification Review Division
Office of Information Services
Directorate of Administration

Attachment:
1. Portions (Chapter 1 & 15) of manuscript (Army Communications in Southeast Asia).
2. List of Deletions.

Unclassified when Separated from Attachment

Distribution:
25X1A Orig - Addressee w/att
1 - Liaison w/Dept. of Army w/att 2 & 1
1 - Chrono w/o att
[redacted] ff

SECRET

LIST OF DELETIONS

"A Flawed Legacy: 1945 - 1960" (Portion)

25X1C

Page 35 "Although the use ... from South Vietnam"

Page 36 "When President Diem ... neighboring countries,"

Page 43-44 "The U.S. operations ... highway patrolmen ..."

Page 44-45 "In the fall ... mounted by the Communists."

Page 45 Footnote: "memo Special Asst ... Williams Papers"

LIST OF SUGGESTED DELETIONS

"North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Communications" (Portion)

Pages 1-2 Footnote: "Rpt, Am Emb ... File 102795, 66A3138/215, WNRC"

Page 4 Footnote: "CIA, Jan 72, ... P. 84, CMH"

Page 7 Footnote: "CIA, NIS: NVN ... DIL123368, DIA."

Page 11 Footnote: "CIA, Dec 67 ... pp 25-26."

Page 12 Footnote: "CIA, NIS ... page 26."

Page 13 Footnote: "... NIS: NVN ... Both in DIA."

Page 18 Footnote: "... rpt, CIA ... p. 28"

Page 39 Footnote: "... and CIA ... pp 15, 42-44, CMH."

Pages 45-46 Footnote: "CIA Feb ... Transportation Group"

Page 47 Footnote: "... CIA, Guide ... Province, pp 15-16"

Note: List of deletions is SECRET
List of suggested deletions is Unclassified.

25X1

way to the Mekong Delta, [redacted]

of programming that the South Vietnamese were able to broadcast from their primitive facilities. In addition to the programming of Radio Hanoi, called the Voice of Vietnam, South Vietnam was harangued with Vietnamese-language broadcasts from Radio Peiping and Radio Moscow. President Diem angrily appealed to Secretary of the Army Wilber M. Brucker, during his visit to South Vietnam in September 1958, to use the influence of the Department of Defense to have a high-powered transmitter built at Hue, a city fifty miles south of the North Vietnamese border, to enable South Vietnam to mount a counteroffensive in the propaganda war with the Communists. With no authority to fill the request, Secretary Brucker did tell General Williams to notify him periodically concerning the progress of the radio project. General Williams warned him that by sending information through military channels concerning a U.S. Operations Mission project, he would be compromising his position on the Country Team since Ambassador Durbrow had directed that the Embassy would handle all correspondence concerning activities of the Country Team. Secretary Brucker told General Williams to explain to the Ambassador that he would be communicating his "military observations" of the progress on the project.*

STATINTL

[redacted] CMH; Record of conversation, Meeting between Sec Army Brucker and President Diem - 3 Sep 58, 1700;

STATINTL

Improper staffing, [redacted] conflicting priorities within the Country Team had caused confusion and delays during a time when the South Vietnamese vitally needed strong telecommunications and broadcasting to counter an increasingly aggressive political and military offensive by the Communists. While development of a South Vietnamese communications system was stalled by bureaucractic delays within the American aid program, the North Vietnamese were rapidly building a less ambitious but efficient communications network for their own nation. Rehabilitating the old French wire lines and using radios that the Soviet Union and China had given their new communist ally, veteran Viet Minh communicators had constructed a comprehensive wire and radio-telegraph system that linked every province in North Vietnam with Hanoi.*

STATINTL

[redacted]

STATINTL

[redacted] Incl to Ltr, Army Attache, Saigon, to DA, ACofS, G-2, 17 Feb 54, sub: Information Received...Vietnam, file 10275, ACSI files, 66A3138/215, WNRC.

Providing communications for the Viet Cong, those Communists who had secretly remained in South Vietnam after the Geneva Accords, was far more difficult. The only legal means of communications between north and south was post cards that were supposed to contain only personal information. Exchanged on a bridge in the Demilitarized Zone

contact with infiltration groups as they traveled along the southern half of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.*

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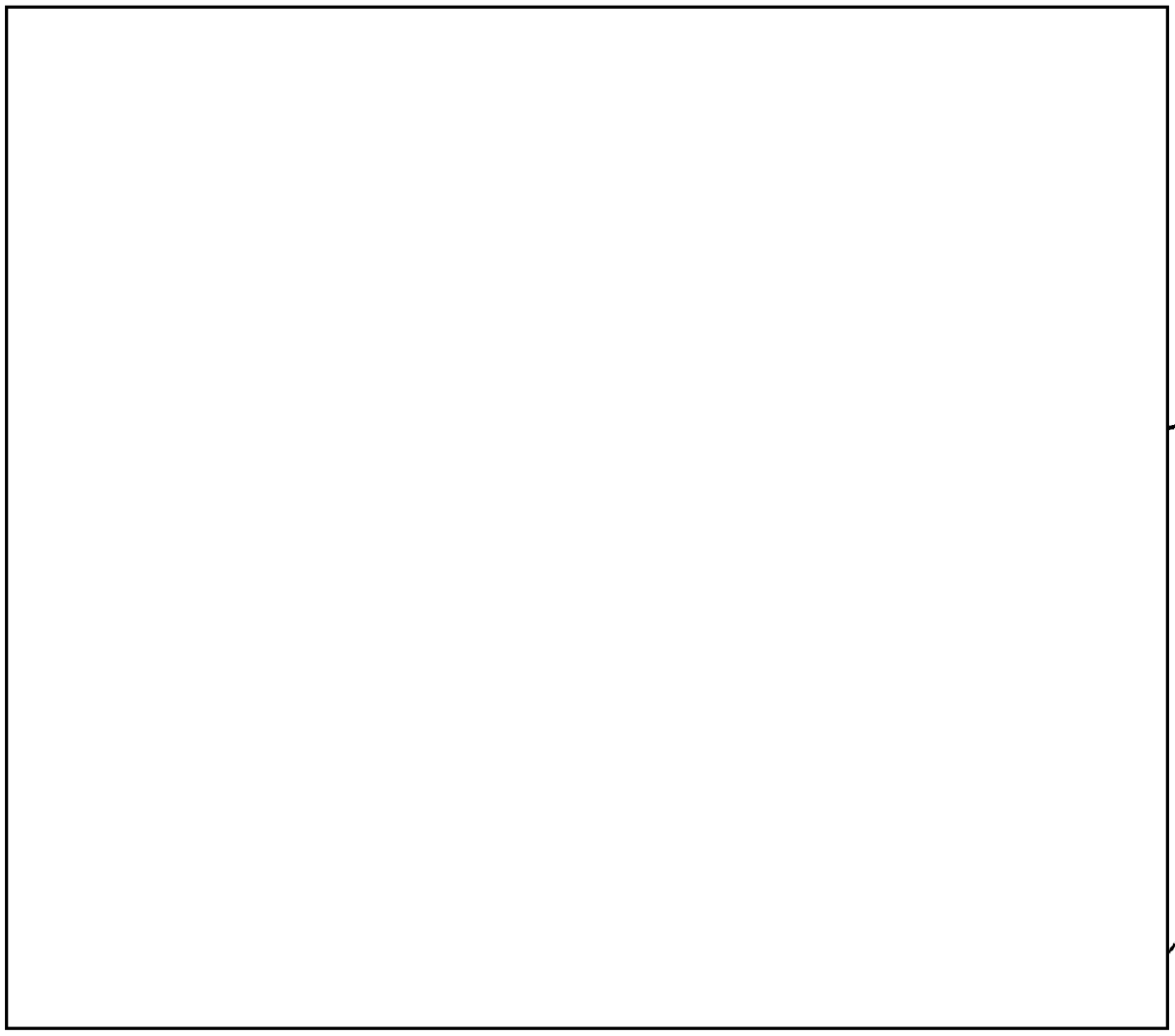
*CIA, Subversion pp. 2,9; Spector, Advice and Support, ch. 14, pp. 15-27.

STATINTL



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*Msg, Williams to Schow, 6 Jan 55, file 96; DF, Ch, Direct Aid Div, to Ch, MAAG, 29 Jan 57, sub: Conversation with General Don on

Intercept; DF, Ch, Direct Aid Div, to Ch, MAAG, 14 Jan 59. Both in no. 3, file 23; Record of conversation between President Diem and General Williams, 15 Mar 57, in record of conferences with President Diem, 31 Dec 56-12 Sep 57. All in General Williams Papers. Ltr, CINC, French Forces in Indochina, to Military Attache, American Legation, Saigon, Mar 52, 66A3138/215, WNRC.

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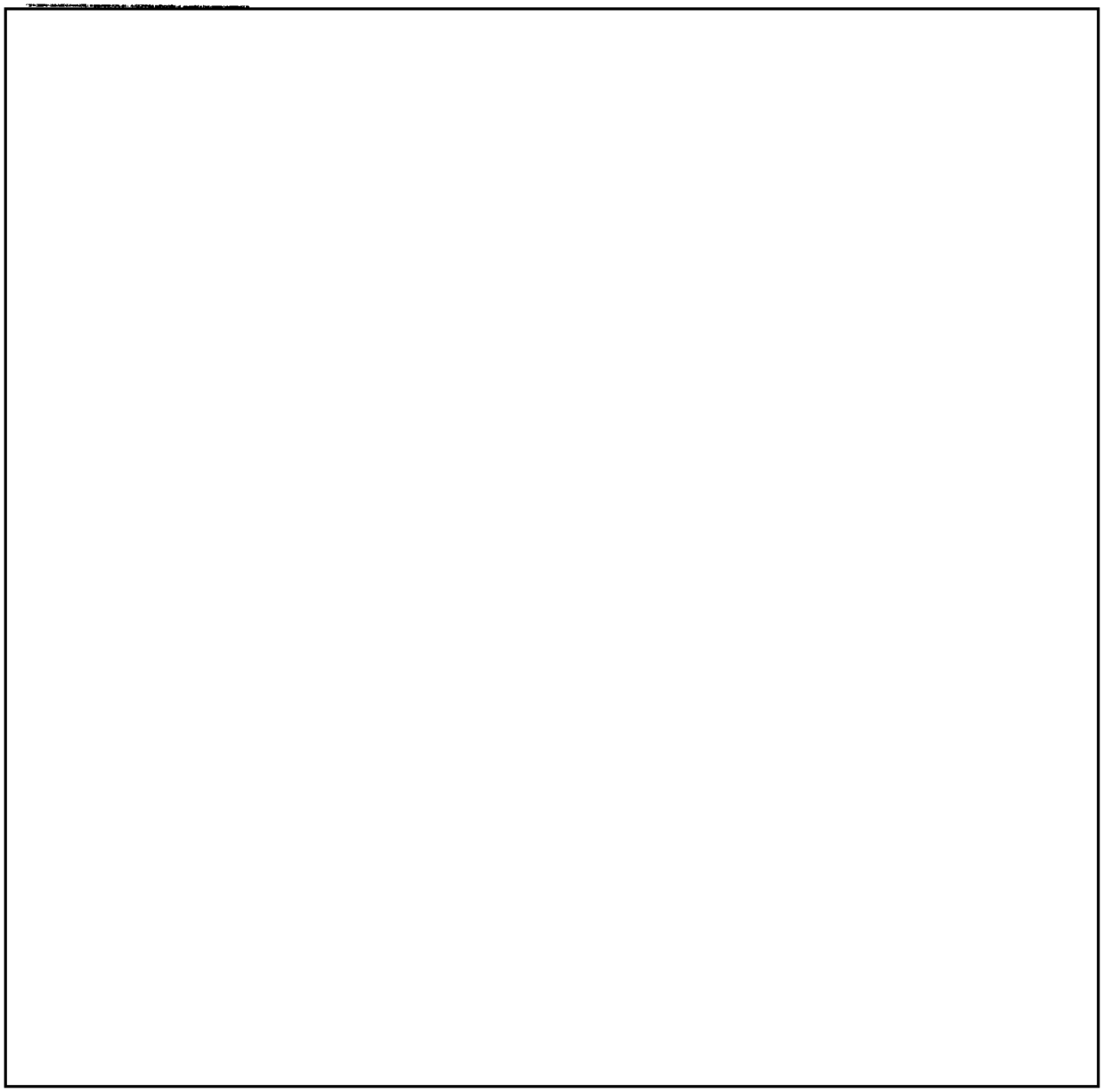

tnam, ISA 413.44VN, 64A2170/31, WNRC.

The rapid resupply of tactical communications equipment in the mer of 1960 did little to resolve a desperate need for some means South Vietnamese militiamer, called Self-Defense Forces, guarding lages and hamlets to summon help from the paramilitary soldiers, led the Civil Guard, at the district and province headquarters. was there a means for province chiefs to call for support from ular Army units to repulse heavy Viet Cong attacks within their vinces. Messages could travel the hundreds of kilometers from gon to a division in the northernmost part of the country faster n from a beleagured village to a South Vietnamese Army post five lometers down the road.*

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*Interv with Paul Katz, former communications engineer, U.S. erations Mission, 15 May 78.

Shortages of equipment and disagreement over organization and ployment of the Civil Guard and Self-Defense Forces had left the ral security forces relatively ineffective. Military advisers felt at the Civil Guard, which was assigned to the Ministry of Interior, ould be trained and equipped as a military force and transferred to e Ministry of Defense.

STATINTL

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the armed forces and defend against heavily armed communist regular units in time of war. He especially disdained of the failure of the U.S. Operations Mission to provide the Civil Guard with communications and even appealed -- unsuccessfully -- to other Western countries for signal equipment for that purpose.*

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*Record of conversation during protocol visit of General I.D. White to President Diem, 16 Jan 58, in records of conferences with President Diem, 28 Dec 57 to 29 May 58, General Williams Papers.

STATINTL The importance of communications in combatting communist terrorism in rural communities had been acknowledged early in the

[redacted]

Planning to integrate Civil Guard communications with the proposed national network, the civilian advisers working with the Civil Guard had delayed ordering equipment for rural security forces until completion of the design for the telecommunications network. While the pleas for communications were lost amid bureaucratic haggling and technical delays, Communist domination of isolated regions that were without communications spread dramatically.*

*Memo for General Williams, 7 Mar 60, sub: Conversations With President Diem During Visit to School Installations at Nha Trang, in records of conferences with President Diem, 30 Nov 59 to 22 Aug 60, General Williams Papers.

By the summer of 1960, when Lt. Gen. Lionel C. McGarr arrived to replace General Williams as commander of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, little had been resolved. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had dispatched General McGarr with the mandate to draft with the South Vietnamese a plan to guide their armed forces in restoring the nation's internal security. Finding that only "immediate and

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Communications

When the Geneva Accords were signed in 1954, telecommunications in North and South Vietnam were in woeful shape. Military equipment, much of it dating from World War II was worn out from years of hard use in the grueling climate and terrain of Indochina. Obsolete commercial communications networks built by the French before World War II lay in ruin from war damage and neglect. Although both nations faced formidable obstacles to the establishment of even rudimentary communications, prospects appeared much brighter for North Vietnam. Because the French had handled all communications matters, both military and civil, in Indochina, their departure in 1956 left the new Republic of Vietnam with little serviceable equipment or native expertise to rebuild telecommunications facilities. The North Vietnamese, on the other hand, inherited the valuable communications resources of the victorious Viet Minh Army: experienced communicators and a battle-tested military signal organization.*

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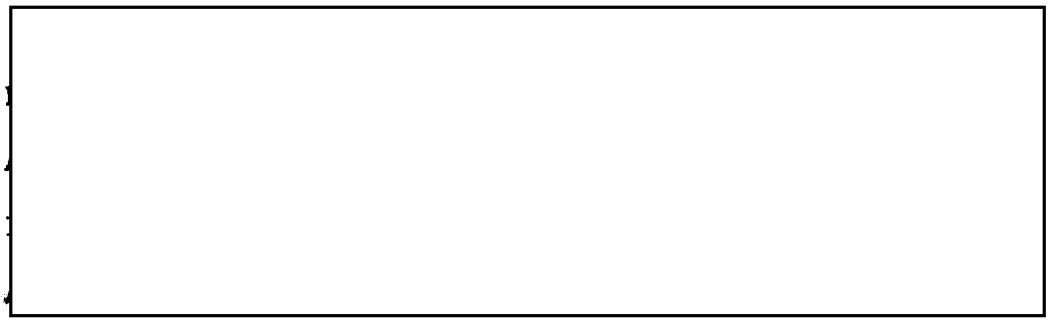

While the South Vietnamese laboriously developed a telecommunications system with the logistical and training support of American advisers during the late 1950s, the North Vietnamese interlaced their homeland with an austere, but comprehensive, communications network. By 1960 the powerful North Vietnamese governmental agency, the General Directorate of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting, had rehabilitated the old French wire network and installed radio-telegraph stations in every province. Encouraged by promises of aid from several Communist allies, North Vietnam then boldly embarked on an ambitious five-year modernization plan for telecommunications. The Communists intended to build a national microwave system, complete with automatic switchboards, to supplement the wire network. Automatic radio-teletype and voice radios would replace the existing radio-telegraph system, a slow manual Morse net. They even envisioned a television broadcasting system.*

STATINTL

Although few of the Communists' modernization hopes were

nationalists displeased with Diem, the many communications links emanating from Hanoi to South Vietnam belied any claims of National Liberation Front autonomy from North Vietnam. Although the insurgents had a clandestine headquarters, called the Central Office for South Vietnam, in a remote jungle area near the Cambodian border, Hanoi maintained direct communications with communist bases throughout South Vietnam in addition to funneling strategic direction through the new field headquarters. To relay communications from Hanoi to remote areas in the south, North Vietnamese communicators established a large communications complex at Dong Hoi about fifty miles north of the border with South Vietnam.*

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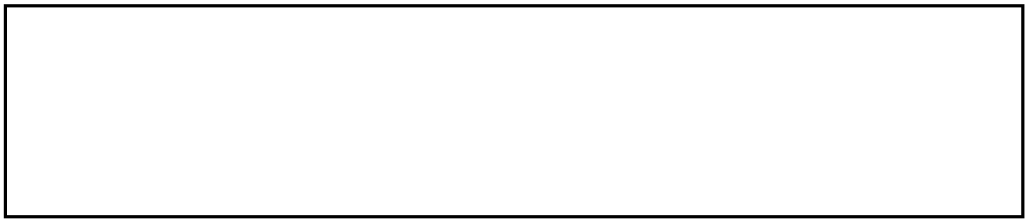

The oldest and most reliable strategic communications system available to the North Vietnamese was a clandestine courier network in operation since the French Indochina War along an old Viet Minh messenger trail on the eastern slopes of the Truong Son Mountain chain. Building way stations a day's journey apart along the route, the Communists turned the trail into a communications corridor in which messages were relayed Pony Express-style back and forth between North

was a legitimate revolutionary organization existing independently of North Vietnam, Radio Liberation operated an international broadcast station; that international transmitter, however, was located not in South Vietnam, but at the Radio Hanoi communications complex in Me Tri, a suburb of Hanoi. As Communist propaganda assumed an increasingly important role after the beginning of the Paris peace negotiations in 1968, the Me Tri complex grew to house twenty-three transmitters beaming broadcasts throughout the world in ten languages.*

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Of many special communications networks established as the insurgency accelerated during the early 1960s, one operated by the North Vietnamese strategic intelligence service, called the Research Agency, was the most comprehensive and active. To manage its covert operations in South Vietnam, the Research Agency used a combination of radio broadcast, courier, and radio-telegraph.*

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* Discussion of communications for strategic intelligence

communications. In 1965 North Vietnamese communicators still depended on the old civil radio net and 7,000 miles of open wire lines.*

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* ASA, "C-E Limited War Study," pp. 83-84.

The expansion of the war to North Vietnamese territory in 1965 -- in the form of American bombing of strategic targets -- ended all hopes of modernizing civil communications. Commercial microwave systems and television broadcasting were unaffordable luxuries in a nation at war, and automatic switchboards would be useless when wirelines were being cut by bomb shrapnel. North Vietnam's civilian communicators dedicated their limited facilities to support air defense, military, and police forces defending the homeland.*

STATINTL

North Vietnam's armed forces had always depended on the civil networks for most administrative communications. The Signal and Liaison Bureau of the North Vietnamese General Staff had focused on developing communications links to the south and training and outfitting new signal unis in the North Vietnamese Army. With the beginning of the bombing campaign,

North Vietnamese signalmen began operating parts of the civil network and diverting tactical communications equipment from regular units to a civil defense network and for newly formed air defense regiments. When communist allies sent the first multichannel radio relay sets to North Vietnam, the Communists gave them to the air defense units to link radar sites, visual observation stations, and anti-aircraft batteries. By the late 1960s, air defense communications comprised the most comprehensive and sophisticated network in North Vietnam.*

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* ASA, "C-E Limited War Study", pp. 88-89, 234; MACV, Int Rpt, 8 Sep 69, 1516-1237-69, 334-74-010/74, WNRC (C).

Military and civil authorities used the civil network to warn the populace of impending bombing attacks, to report on bomb damage, and to coordinate reconstruction efforts. Because most wirelines were strung alongside strategic transportation arteries -- highways, railroads, and bridges -- the civil wire system itself was often an unintended victim of the bombing attacks. During the laborious restoration of destroyed wirelines, the old single channel radio-telegraph network was often the only means of communications for large sections of the country.*

STATINTL

Recognizing that some other means of national communications was needed, the North Vietnamese government decided to make better use of the facilities of Radio Hanoi for domestic broadcasting. Since communist leaders, fearing that the populace might hear anti-communist propaganda broadcasts from other countries, controlled the distribution of radio receivers, North Vietnamese communicators had to install a "closed circuit" system. After wiring over 180,000 loudspeakers to government-controlled receiving stations, the Voice of Vietnam -- which Radio Hanoi called itself -- added to the din in the markets and public places of the land. Providing a practical means of communicating civil defense information and psychologically strengthening the North Vietnamese people's resolve to endure the sacrifices of the war, radio broadcasting soon became a major element of North Vietnam's domestic communications.*

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* ASA, "C-E Limited War Study," p. 88. [redacted] STATINTL

STATINTL [redacted]

STATINTL [redacted] Both in DIA.

By the time the American air campaign against North

the North Vietnamese Army fought in South Vietnam were supported by organic signal battalions. By late 1966 the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese had approximately one hundred and fifty combat battalions in the field under the command and control of thirty-two regimental headquarters and seven divisional headquarters. Besides the organic signal units assigned at each level, that entire force was supported by three area support signal battalions.*

STATINTL [redacted] STATINTL

Rpt, CICV, 3 Dec 65, "VC Signal Organization in RVN" (ST 67-001), pp. 1-5; MACV J2, 18 Oct 66, Briefing for Staff Members of Preparedness Investigative subcommittee, Senate Committee on Armed Services, Viewgraph 8. All in CMH (U).

When the U.S. 1st Infantry Division entered War Zone C during early 1967 to attempt to overrun the headquarters of the Central Office for South Vietnam, the H-44 Signal Battalion supported the communist headquarters. Commanded by Lt. Col. Tam Sai who also was the chief of the COSVN Signal Bureau, the signal battalion provided internal headquarters communications and operated six 15-KW radios on nets to Hanoi, the military regions, and combat units providing security in the area around the headquarters. The signal battalion of to

system operated by the 559th Transportation Group along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.*

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* Discussion of the commo-liaison network within South Vietnam is based on MACV, History (1968), vol. 1, pp. 122-123; Rand Corporation, Aug 1967, "Insurgent Organization and Operations: A Case Study of the Viet Cong in the Delta, 1964-1966," RM-5239-ISA/ARPA, pp. 151-154;

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[redacted]

The nucleus of the commo-liaison system within South Vietnam was the way station, a small base of operations and relay point usually established in a Viet Cong controlled village near a messenger route. Besides being a place where couriers from nearby districts and military units could pick-up and deliver messages, the stations, built approximately a day's journey apart, also served as rest stops where infiltrating personnel could stop to sleep and eat and supplies could be stored. Serving also as guides for infiltrators and porters, couriers set out along the routes at a scheduled time each day to rendezvous with their counterparts coming in the opposite direction from adjacent stations. The couriers transferred their charges and messages and return to their base stations. On the following day the messages, infiltrators, and supplies were relayed farther

echelon maintenance was little better. A shortage of trained repairmen and insufficient maintenance training programs enabled the Viet Cong to only man centralized maintenance shops at the regional and regimental headquarters.*

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* CICV, ST 67-067, pp. 23-24.

In the late 1960s, the entire logistical support system improved considerably with development of large support bases, or Binh Trams, along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Troops from the North Vietnamese Army's 559th Transportation Group had moved into eastern Laos and Cambodia and converted the commo-liaison way stations on the old strategic messenger route into headquarters for the Binh Trams. Complete with depots, repair shops, and hospitals, the Binh Trams were concealed from observation from the air by heavy canopied jungle and, in many cases, were partially built underground.*

STATINTL [redacted] he GRDS Misc File, A76-332/9, NSA; DIA, 24 Feb 71, "TAC Intell Digest No. 8," p. 4, A 76-332/8, NSA.

Manned by two North Vietnamese Army signal battalions, the communications complexes that evolved around the Binh

45-46

Trams functioned much as army area signal centers in the American Army. From a switchboard at each Binh Tram, wire lines emanated to all supporting and security forces. Radio nets linked each Binh Tram with the regional headquarters and units in South Vietnam that it supported. From north to south along the trail, a Morse code net linked the way stations. In the early 1970s the group's signalmen began installing cable and modern Soviet and Eastern European radio relay equipment between Binh Trams. With the completion of that system along the entire Binh Tram chain in 1974, the North Vietnamese had a sophisticated multichannel system to handle direct telephone and teletype communications between Hanoi and the Central Office for South Vietnam. In twenty years, the old messenger trail had grown from an unsophisticated commo-liaison network to a major logistical corridor supported by a modern strategic communications system.*

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* Int Rpt, 12 Oct 71, TIR VN 2-207-6064-71, file 520-04 (98) TIR RVN #4 (71), A73-42/5, ASA; STATINTL [redacted] STATINTL

[redacted]

In 1971 communist communicators from throughout South Vietnam met to determine whether new developments in the war dictated any adjustments in signal tactics or doctrine. North Vietnamese units, equipped with more modern equipment, had

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
THE CHIEF OF MILITARY HISTORY AND THE CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314

DAMH-HD

23 APR 1981

STATINTL [redacted]
CIA Historian
203 Key Building
Washington, DC 20505

STATINTL Dear [redacted]

Inclosed are portions of an unedited manuscript, Army Communications in Southeast Asia, by LTC John D. Bergen (Inclosure 1). This volume will be published by the Center of Military History (CMH) as an unclassified official history in the forthcoming US Army in Vietnam Series.

Request you review for security appropriate portions of the manuscript that have cited references which are listed at Inclosure 2.

Pertinent portions of the manuscript are being reviewed for security by other government agencies whose material has been cited (Joint Chiefs of Staff, Defense Communications Agency, Department of Defense, National Security Agency, State Department, US Air Force, Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, and other appropriate Army agencies). Upon clearance and subsequent CMH review and editing, the entire manuscript will be forwarded to Army and DOD Public Affairs for open publication clearance.

This manuscript is considered unclassified, however, until it is cleared by all appropriate agencies, please store it in an appropriate security container.

Please acknowledge receipt by notifying this office (272-0323/24). Questions concerning the manuscript's content may be referred to the undersigned.

It would be appreciated if the review could be accomplished within 14 days of receipt. Please call the above number when the review is completed.

Sincerely,

JAMES W. DUNN
COL, MI
Chief, Histories Division

2 Incl
1. Chaps. 1, 15
2. List of Sources

List of CIA Sources

Chapter 1 - pages 30-32, 35

Chapter 15 - pages 2-4, 7, 11-12, 18, 39, 45-47

Note: balance in above chapters covers associated or general background information